

MSK Radiology Fellowship Match: Frequently Asked Questions

We have tried to highlight some of the frequently asked questions below. You are strongly encouraged to review the NRMP Policies & Compliance for specific guidelines, requirements and responsibilities at <https://www.nrmp.org/policies/>. Of particular importance are the following documents:

1. Specialties Matching Service* Match Participation Agreements
 - a. Applicants: https://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024-SMS-MPA-Applicant_Final.pdf
 - b. Programs: https://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-MPA-SMS-Program_Final.pdf
 - c. Institutions: https://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-MPA-SMS-Institution_Final.pdf
2. NRMP Codes of Conduct (Applicants, Programs, Institutions): <https://www.nrmp.org/intro-to-the-match/the-match-agreement/match-codes-of-conduct/>
3. Fellowship Match All In Policy: <https://www.nrmp.org/policy/fellowship-match-all-in-policy/>

Who is eligible to participate in the MSK Fellowship Match?

To be eligible for the NRMP MSK Fellowship Match, fellowship programs must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Accredited by the ACGME or another entity deemed acceptable to NRMP (this represents a minority of MSK fellowship programs); or
- Affiliated with an ACGME-accredited residency program in the primary discipline of diagnostic radiology (this represents a majority of MSK fellowship programs); or
- Lead to certification or endorsement and oversight by a board recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (this does not currently apply to any MSK fellowship programs)
- Have secured funding sufficient to train each matched fellow for the duration of the training program; and
- Be activated for participation in the SMS Match by the institutional official through the R3 system by the published deadline.

The SSR is the sponsoring organization for the MSK Fellowship Match. In order to participate in the NRMP Fellowship Match, the SSR must annually attest that $\geq 75\%$ of eligible MSK fellowship programs and $\geq 75\%$ of available fellowship positions are represented in the Match. Therefore, confirming your program's commitment to the Match is vitally important to move the process forward. It is no secret that the more programs that participate, the more fair and successful the Match will be—we are striving for 100% participation from eligible programs.

Canadian MSK fellowship programs can opt-in to the Match through an NRMP partner organization. They are not considered part of the denominator for the 75% participation threshold. If a Canadian program is interested in participating, please contact the NRMP directly.

Reference: <http://www.nrmp.org/fellowship-program-eligibility/>

What is the timeline for the MSK Fellowship Match?

The Match timeline is established by the NRMP. The MSK Match will occur on the same timeline as all other Radiology Fellowship Subspecialty Matches according to NRMP guidelines. The NRMP Match registration and ranking process is independent of the application and interview timeline.

- July 2025 Appointments Match Dates: <https://www.nrmp.org/fellowship/radiology/>

The SSR supports the fellowship embargo guidelines established by the Society of Chairs of Academic Radiology Departments (SCARD) for the fellowship application and interview process:

<https://www.scardweb.org/policies>

Between the Rank Order List Certification Deadline and Match Day, applicants cannot apply for, discuss, interview for, or accept any position that would run concurrently with positions offered in the Match. Similarly, all programs (both those within and outside of the Match) must refrain from discussing, interviewing for, or offering positions during that time period.

The uniform application, interview and NRMP R3 timelines are essential for maintaining the integrity of the Match. Candidates can only participate in a single specialty match at a given time to prevent multiple appointments from being made in the Match, but can simultaneously apply to multiple program tracks within the Radiology Fellowship Match. For example, a candidate may apply to both Neuroradiology and MSK fellowship programs. The candidate submits a single NRMP Match rank list that includes both Neuroradiology and MSK programs in the order selected by the applicant, and can therefore be matched into only a single fellowship program (Neuroradiology or MSK, but not both).

Many MSK fellowship program directors have expressed an interest in moving back the NRMP Match timeline so that fellowship interviews and selection would occur after the Core Exam. This is a decision that must be made in cooperation with the other Radiology Fellowship programs in the Match and approved by the NRMP.

What does it cost to participate in the Match?

NRMP Match Fees (2024): <https://www.nrmp.org/intro-to-the-match/match-fees/>

- Applicant registration: \$70
 - Includes up to 20 unique program codes on the rank order list
- Institution registration: \$250 per Match

- There is 1 institutional registration fee per match, and it is billed at the institutional level to the GME Designated Institutional Officer (DIO). For example, if a single institution participates in the Neuroradiology and MSK fellowship matches, there is only 1 institutional fee of \$250—it covers all subspecialties within the general "Radiology Fellowship" match.
- Program registration: \$60/program track
 - This is billed to the institutional GME office; how or whether the cost is transferred to individual departments or sections is determined by the institution's GME office. If there are two program tracks for a given fellowship at an institution (e.g. a Clinical MSK fellowship and a Research MSK fellowship), then the total program track fee is $\$60 \times 2 = \120 .
- Matched applicant: \$60 per matched applicant
 - This is billed by the NRMP to the Institutional DIO.

What is the "All In Policy"?

As the sponsoring organization, the SSR has opted to abide by the "All In Policy" for the MSK fellowship match (Breast Imaging, Emergency Radiology, and Interventional Radiology specialties also participate in the All In Policy). This means that for eligible MSK fellowship programs who decide to participate in the Match, they must list all available fellowship spots in the Match (i.e. a program cannot withhold any spots to be filled outside of the match, including for internal candidates). This helps our specialty in several ways:

- It will make it easier to reach the 75% threshold for listing available fellowship spots in the match. The denominator of that threshold is determined by the total number of available fellowship spots for a given subspecialty—whether the spots are listed in the match or not. By requiring all available fellowship spots at participating programs to be listed in the match (including those for internal candidates), the numerator for the threshold is increased and stabilized year-to-year.
- By implementing the "All In Policy", the NRMP will help monitor Match compliance and investigate possible aberrant or non-compliant behavior. This helps ensure a level playing field for the Match, and shifts some of the burden for monitoring the Match from the SSR to the NRMP.
- Most importantly, the "All In Policy" is the only option that is truly in the spirit of the Match. We are doing this because we believe it is the right thing to do, and we believe the "All In Policy" will help create the level of commitment and transparency required to make this work.

Reference: <https://www.nrmp.org/policy/fellowship-match-all-in-policy/>

What are the policies surrounding internal fellowship candidates?

Because MSK has opted to abide by the "All In Policy", all available fellowship positions at participating programs must be listed in the Match—including those for internal candidates. Internal candidates must register for and be ranked in the match in order to secure an MSK fellowship spot. That said, it is within the match guidelines for both applicants and programs to express interest in each other; however, they cannot solicit verbal or written statements outside of the Match implying a commitment. Any such expressed interest is non-binding and cannot be contingent on any agreement outside of the Match results. Assuming a reasonable level of trust and honesty of both parties, this should provide some level of security for candidates and programs—regardless of whether the applicant is internal or external. This does not represent a match violation.

Reference: See Section 6.3 Confidentiality of the Match Participation Agreement
<https://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-MPA-SMS-Program.pdf>

Are there consequences for eligible MSK fellowship programs that decide not to participate in the Match?

Neither the NRMP nor the SSR can require a program to participate in the Match if they do not want to, but we recognize that success of the Match depends on widespread cooperation and commitment. As leaders and educators in MSK radiology, the primary incentive to participate in the Match is self-evident—it is vital for sustaining the value and quality of MSK radiology fellowship training.

The SSR wants to support programs that have committed to the Match, and incentivize others to join. Therefore, the SSR will only list the following MSK fellowship programs on the SSR website (<https://skeletalrad.org/my-msk/fellowships/all>):

- MSK fellowship programs that participate in the Match
- MSK fellowship programs that are ineligible to participate in the Match, but have agreed to abide by a uniform interview and selection timeline determined by the SSR in concordance with NRMP guidelines
- Canadian MSK fellowship programs

The SSR will not extend Member-In-Training (MIT) benefits to fellowship classes selected during year(s) that Match-eligible programs choose not to participate in the Match.

How does this affect MSK fellowship programs that are currently not eligible to participate in the Match?

There are several highly competitive MSK fellowship programs that are not eligible to participate in the Match because they either are not ACGME-accredited, or are not affiliated with an ACGME-accredited residency program in the core discipline of Diagnostic Radiology. To encourage compliance with the Match timeline, the SSR is asking these programs to abide by the interview and selection embargo guidelines established by SCARD (<https://www.scardweb.org/policies>).

If these programs become ACGME-accredited fellowships in the future, they would then be eligible to participate in the Match and could directly register with the NRMP.

Programs that are ineligible for the Match and do not abide by the SCARD fellowship embargo dates will be delisted from the SSR website. The SSR will not extend Member-In-Training (MIT) benefits to fellowship classes selected during year(s) that Match-ineligible programs choose not to participate in the SCARD embargo deadline.

What happens to unmatched MSK fellowship applicants, or training programs that go unfilled in the Match?

There is not a Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (“SOAP”) process for Fellowship Matches. The NRMP will provide a list of unfilled programs to applicants that are unmatched, and a list of unmatched applicants to programs that are unfilled—there is then a “scramble” to fill those spots. Spots filled through the “scramble” are appointed outside of the match and are therefore not bound by the NRMP match participation agreement.

Reference: See Section 10.0 Vacant Positions of the Match Participation Agreement
<https://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-MPA-SMS-Program.pdf>

What will be done to programs that violate the Match, or to Match-ineligible programs that violate the uniform embargo timeline established by SCARD?

Programs that violate the Match agreement will be subject to penalties and procedures determined by the NRMP. The SSR Executive Committee will also review cases of Match violations to determine consequences on a case-by-case basis.

The SSR Executive Committee will review any reported cases of SCARD embargo violations by Match-ineligible programs that had previously agreed to abide by the uniform timeline, with consequences determined on a case-by-case basis.

How can program directors communicate their MSK Fellowship Program's intent to participate in the Match?

Intent to participate in the MSK Match can be made by completing the MSK Match Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): <https://skeletalrad.org/2024-msk-fellowship-match-mou-submission>

Once the required information has been submitted through the survey link, your program will be recognized on the SSR website as an MSK Match participant. Please note that all items in the survey are required, including the DOB for Fellowship Directors and Program Coordinators and the ACGME code for either the accredited MSK Fellowship Program or its affiliated diagnostic radiology residency (your Diagnostic Radiology Residency Program Director will have this information).

How does participation in the MSK Match affect the application process for programs and applicants?

The MSK Match is not supported by the ERAS application service because of the large number of non-ACGME-accredited programs, so each MSK fellowship program will distribute, collect and review their own applications. In other words, the application and interview process is independent of the NRMP Match registration and ranking process. The SSR has developed a Common Application Form that programs can elect to use to simplify the process for applicants; this is available for download to programs and applicants on the SSR website: <https://skeletalrad.org/my-msk/msk-match-applicants>

It is not possible to know how many candidates each program will need to interview to fill their fellowship spots in the Match, or how many programs candidates will need to apply to in order to match into an MSK fellowship spot. Match data is available from the NRMP: <https://www.nrmp.org/data-topic/>.

Does participation in the MSK Match affect the training structure or responsibilities of MSK fellows?

There is no change to fellow responsibilities, practice latitude (i.e. ability to read or do procedures independently), or fellowship education or training requirements for programs participating in the Match. To be eligible to participate in the Match, an MSK fellowship must be either ACGME accredited (this represents a minority of programs), *or* affiliated with an ACGME accredited diagnostic radiology residency (this represents a majority of programs). This is a requirement of the NRMP for programs to be able to participate in the Match, and is in place to have some sort of quality standard for participating programs. Beyond that, the NRMP has no jurisdiction (or interest) in monitoring the training requirements and expectations for individual programs. MSK Fellows appointed through the Match can take independent call, read out studies on their own, supervise residents, and independently perform procedures—this is at the discretion of each individual training program regardless of Match participation.

There is no requirement from the NRMP that MSK fellowship programs become ACGME accredited in order to participate in the Match, or change or restrict their fellows' duties. That said, each institution's GME Designated Institutional Officer (DIO) may have local requirements for their own programs that want to participate in the Match. It is the responsibility of each program director to discuss this with their institution's GME DIO.

How are military or self-funded candidates accommodated in the NRMP Match under the All In Policy?

If the military/self-funded candidate receives approval for MSK fellowship prior to the NRMP quota change deadline, programs have 3 options for accommodating these candidates in the Match:

- 1) Rank the candidate within the institution's regular MSK Match and fellowship quota
- 2) Increase the MSK fellowship quota in the NRMP R3 system to allow for additional fellow(s) under the All In Policy and rank the candidate within that cohort

3) Create a 2nd MSK fellowship track at that institution that would be designated solely for military/self-funded candidates, allowing this to be an "extra" fellowship spot if it fills; if the spot does not fill because the military/self-funded candidate goes elsewhere, the program's regular fellowship quota and funding requirements are unchanged.

If it is not known until after the Match that the military/self-funded candidate has received approval for MSK fellowship, any fellowship spots filled at that time are appointed outside of the Match/NRMP and are NOT in violation of the All In Policy. This is also the case if there are unfilled positions in the MSK Match—any appointments made after the Match to fill those positions are not bound by the NRMP match participation agreement or All In Policy.

Per the NRMP, if a fellowship position is added after the Match due to additional funding and/or increased fellowship quota, the institution needs to report the circumstances to the NRMP when they are reconciling the number of entering fellows with the quota entered into the Match as a part of the All In Policy compliance review, but this is not considered a Match violation.

What are some of the administrative responsibilities of training programs who want to participate in the MSK Imaging Fellowship Match?

Programs should consider the following to prepare for MSK Fellowship Match participation:

- Update your program's MSK fellowship website, and indicate whether or not your program participates in the MSK Match, and/or abides by the SCARD fellowship embargo dates
- Ensure that your program's application requirements and timeline reflect those of the Match and SCARD embargo guidelines
- Determine whether you will use the SSR Common Application Form or your own application form
- MSK Fellowship Program Directors should communicate with their institution's Graduate Medical Education (GME) Designated Institutional Official (DIO) to notify them of their intent to participate in the MSK Imaging Fellowship Match
- Activate your fellowship program in the NRMP R3 system for participation in the Match.
 - Confirm with your GME DIO how NRMP-related fees will be handled between the NRMP, your institution's GME office, and your section/department.
- Each institutional DIO must attest to oversight of all programs at their institution that participate in the Match, and there may be institution-specific requirements that must be met before the DIO will agree to manage the Match for any particular training program. Therefore, it is important that you are aware of and address any local institutional requirements before beginning the MSK fellowship application and interview process.
- The DIO will not have access to the NRMP R3 system to activate your fellowship in the Match until the Match opens. Before your fellowship can be activated within the NRMP R3 program, your DIO must attest to oversight of your program. For MSK fellowships that are not ACGME-

accredited, the DIO must also attest that an affiliation agreement between the institution and fellowship is on file and available to the NRMP.